

# History Teaching in Kenyan Secondary School, for Peace, Reconciliation and National Integration

John Koskey Chang'ach

Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya

"National integration cannot be built by chisel and hammer. It has to grow silently in the minds and hearts of men".

(Kochhar, 1992)

The main objectives of teaching history and government are: First, to demonstrate an understanding of how people and events of the past has influenced the ways in which people live and behave; Second, to appreciate the need for an importance of mutual responsibility; and Third, to develop a sense of patriotism and national pride. The paper seeks to demonstrate that history is the most important subject for producing a strong feeling of nationalism and integrity of Kenya. Proper teaching of history inspires the students with a sense of patriotism to their motherland. However, currently history and government is compulsory up to form two. Taking Uasin Gishu County as a case in point and basing on the 2009 KCSE (Kenya certificate of secondary education) results of history and government, a large proportion of students drop History and Government in form two. Therefore, this paper argues that the objectives set by the Ministry of Education have not been achieved. It is the contention of this paper that proper teaching of history is one of the best ways of creating a sense of being Kenyan in the students. If history is given a new outlook and orientation, the future will become more fascinating and hopeful. The Kenyan history should give us a panoramic view of the period through which Kenyans have maintained the essentials of their culture. If history is given proper attention, it will promote positive ethnicity and discourage negative ethnicity during this period of post-election peace-building.

*Keywords:* teaching, history, peace, reconciliation, national integration

## Introduction

Most schools of any importance have a science laboratory, upon which a considerable sum of money is spent yearly. For history lesson, few schools supply any apparatus but a textbook and a blackboard. This is a society devoid of any shared feeling of belonging or destiny and a mild strain exposes the deep fissures of ethnicity. Creating a national identity helps to trump politics of ethnic division by persuading the youth not to vote for their ethnic group as happened in 2008 in Kenya, but for the party with politics geared towards national development. Teaching of History and Government to the youth of this country is the only glue that can hold us together in our cultural diversity.

## General Objectives for Teaching History and Government

By the end of the course, the learner should be able to (K.I.E (Kenya Institute of Education), 1992):

---

John Koskey Chang'ach, Ph.D., School of Education, Department of Educational Foundations, Moi University.

- (1) Appreciate the importance of history and government;
- (2) Demonstrate an understanding of how people and events of the past has influenced the ways in which people live and behave;
- (3) Understand the social, economic and political development of certain parts of the world and relate to the history of Kenya;
- (4) Derive through the study of history an interest in further learning;
- (5) Develop the capacity for critical analysis of historical data;
- (6) Appreciate the need for an importance of mutual responsibility;
- (7) Develop a sense of patriotism and national pride through participation in various development activities in the country.

### **The Contemporary Situation**

Table 2 shows the number of 2009 KCSE (Kenya certificate of secondary education) candidates and those who did history and government in Uasin Gishu County (Eldoret East, Eldoret West and Wareng districts).

Table 1

*Total Number of KCSE Candidates in Uasin Gishu County in 2009*

District	Total number of KCSE candidates	Total number of candidates history and government	Percentages (%)
Eldoret east	2,117	1,220	57.63
Eldoret west	2,865	1,675	58.46
Wareng	1,833	1,054	57.50

*Note.* Source: KNEC (Kenya National Examination Council).

The percentages show that many students have only done history and government up to form one or two depending on the school. Therefore, many of them do not know about the history of their own country. The information clearly indicates that the objectives set have not been achieved. This is a wake-up call to the policy makers in the Ministry of Education to look into the entire curriculum.

The situation at the national level also indicates that a good percentage of young people finish high school with very little knowledge about their country as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2

*Percentage of KCSE Candidates of History and Government in Kenya in 2009*

Total number of 2009 KCSE candidates in Kenya	Total number of 2009 KCSE candidates in history and government	Percentage (%)
337,404	212,095	62.861

*Note.* Source: KNEC.

In 2009, 125,309 candidates finished form four without demonstrating an understanding of how people and events of the past have influenced the way in which people live and behave, appreciating the need for mutual responsibility and developing a sense of patriotism and national pride. The argument in this paper is that 37% of Kenyan youth completing form four is not an insignificant figure. This calls for an urgent attention by all the stakeholders interested in the youth of this country.

### **Education and Nation Building**

The primary goal of education in any society is to harness and develop the talents and human potentialities

of every individual so that he/she can fulfill his/her moral, intellectual and material needs and contribute to the general well-being, survival and development of that society. Thus, education, in all its facets, is a life-long process through which an individual acquires knowledge and skills that can enable him/her to understand and adapt to an ever-changing physical and social environment. It has been observed that the collective potentialities of people in the form of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes are the main assets of a nation in its development (Namaswa, 2000).

On the other hand, nation-building is a process of reconstructing a society's shattered and economy as to reflect the socio-economic and political needs of the people, who constitute that political community. After the recent post-election violence in Kenya, the government has to take urgent steps to rebuild a new Kenyan nation with a national outlook and identify. To achieve this, education is seen as the only instrument that can be used to bring about this new nation.

### **What Is the Use of History?**

Nobody seems to have any answer. This paper will show that there is a completely satisfactory answer to the question, an overwhelming case for the study of history. History is about human society, its story and how it has come to be what it is, knowing what societies have been like in the past and their evolution will give the clue to the factors that operate in them, the currents and forces that move them and the motives and conflicts, both general and personal, that shape events. It is a study dealing with human nature all the time. It is the only discipline that enables one to understand public events, affairs and trends of the time. Sir Charles Firth tells us, "Not only is history a branch of learning to be studied for its own sake, but a kind of knowledge which is useful to men in daily life to make men wise" (as cited in Rowse, 1963).

History, as a subject of study, rids one of illusions to grow up and become adult. History is as fundamental as our life. It is through what we know of history that we are delivered from our bonds.

### **History and Education**

It is evident that history is a subject of great educational value. As our historical reading widens and our judgment of events matures, we find fine achievements, sad mistakes and much humdrum endurance everywhere in the human record, and we come to see the histories of different peoples, with their contacts of peace and war, their currents of mutual influence and reaction, their parallels and affiliations and their similarities and contrasts. All as a part of one history (Moi, 1986) from that viewpoint, history is the most synoptic and unifying of all studies. But it implies and demands education, fortunately, it also provides it. The process is a dual one. History is a panorama of character in action in every conceivable situation, because it widens indefinitely the circle of our acquaintances, provides abundant material for the analysis of motives and gives opportunity for cultivating restraint, tolerance and charity in the judgment of unpleasant ones. Therefore, this paper states an extremely strong case for the study of history in Kenyan secondary schools, and if possible, makes it a compulsory subject.

### **The Pivotal Position of History Teacher**

The laboratory of history is the world we move about in. And it is desirable that teachers of history should be cultivated by people, capable of introducing their students to the diversity and richness, the memories and associations of the world immediately about them. It is a fact that it is the teacher who can make history a living, interesting and useful subject. The story of man has to be interpreted in as objective and sincere a manner as

possible only if the teacher is equipped with some essential qualities, such as mastery of the subject and techniques. The teacher of history must have the power of realizing and the dead past in the living present, and in fact, have a touch of imagination as well as a vastly large amount of positive knowledge. In the hands of an inspired teacher, history, like any other subject, can become a means of real education. Therefore, this paper advocates for proper training of history teachers and the continued professional growth of the teachers.

### **History Teaching and National Integration**

Kenya today, as never before Kenyans, must stand as one nation. The post-election violence which led to negative ethnicity posed a serious challenge. Unless steps are taken to create an emotional upsurge amongst the people for national unity, the fissiparous tendencies in the people may lead to serious consequences.

No nation can flourish or exist long without the unity of spirit (Ayang-Nyongo, 1993). The choice before us is unity or destruction. We must, therefore, hold together as a single, compact and undivided nation, or we will fall to pieces. We must achieve and consolidate the unity of Kenya. Without it nothing worthwhile can be accomplished. If we wish to retain our hard won freedom, national emotional integration has to be our natural tune, because once the people are integrated emotionally, they start feeling as one nation, and there will not be any further difficulty to national solidarity. National emotional integration is, therefore, the greatest need of the hour.

**What is national emotional integration?** National integration is a feeling that binds the citizens of a country. The job is to inculcate knowledge of the country, pride in it and respect for the best in the national, environment, aspirations, traditions and a wish to improve our country. National integration aims at fostering increasing respect and affection for those belonging to other cultural and ethnic groups. It creates and strengthens the people attributes of patriotism and national pride. National integration can be unity in diversity. The feeling of overall oneness of the nation results in fostering national integration (Ogot, 1996).

Emotional integration is the intellectual integration which education can accomplish. An emotionally integrated community gives the people the feeling of espousing a common cause and gives up loyalty to ethnic groups. It gives the progressive realization that there can be similarities among differences.

**Why is national emotional integration?** We must strive for promoting national emotional integration among our students for the following reasons: (1) To preserve unity in diversity—Kenya is a land full of diversities. There are differences in the ways of life of the people in different parts of the country. There is also a common bond of a common culture, which binds the individuals into a single nation. This unity in diversity has to be emphasized; (2) To ensure rapid social, economic and educational progress—Kenya can progress in the various fields if it is united; (3) To enrich the cultural life of the nation by developing the culture of the various groups as a part of a single nation; (4) To check fissiparous tendencies; and (5) To ensure security from internal danger and external aggression.

**Role of education in national emotional integration.** Education, properly oriented in respect of the knowledge which it imparts, the capacity for thinking which it develops, the training of emotions which it undertakes and the practical activities which it organizes, can be a potent instrument in the making of the people of the country an integrated nation. In order to bring about national integration in the country, our secondary schools need to make a deliberate effort to reorient their educational programmes to educate the students on the virtues of culture and civilization. This reorientation is required under various aspects of school programmes like the aims of education, the content, the teaching process, text-books, and the research and so

on. Through content, methods and devices education should develop the following:

- (1) The understanding that Kenya is one nation;
- (2) The understanding that there is a basic unity underlying the diversities in Kenya's culture;
- (3) A legitimate pride in one's own culture and also an appreciation for the culture of others;
- (4) An understanding that throughout Kenya's history borrowing of others' culture has constantly taken place;
- (5) An appreciation that the different parts of the country are economically interdependent and that the country faces many common problems;
- (6) That the country's social and economic progress depends upon the cooperation of all parts and all people of Kenya and also upon the balanced development of every part of the country;
- (7) A feeling that the cooperation and effort of every citizen is essential for the attainment of the country's ideals;
- (8) Respect for other individuals and their beliefs, irrespective of the place of their birth, religion or language;
- (9) An appreciation of steps the country has taken and is taking towards the attainment of national integration;
- (10) A skill to subordinate group or local loyalties to national loyalties;
- (11) An understanding that tradition and history have to be tackled and interpreted in an objective way so as to serve as a sound foundation for a growing society.

**History and national integration.** History is the most important school subject for producing a strong feeling of nationalism and integrity of Kenya. History must inspire its students with love of the motherland. It should be taught as a story of mankind. The Kenyan history should give us a panoramic view of the long period through which we have maintained the essentials of our culture. The teaching of history in secondary schools should be given a new orientation and outlook in the following areas: history content, history teaching, text-books and illustrations used in teaching, each of which may be used as a source of patriotic influence.

The paper argues that Kenyan history should be presented as a coherent whole in an objective way and emphasis should be on cultural synthesis.

### Conclusions

This study is not against the teaching of science in schools, which is obviously essential. But there can be too much of it, especially if it makes exclusive claims or disregards the humanities. There is rather an unthinking bias in favor of science in the schools, and nowadays, people assume that it must be the right thing, since this is the scientific age and it obviously leads to certain careers in industry and elsewhere, but do not consider whether it provides a general education for the mind. National emotional integration is the greatest need of the hour. History is the most important school subject for the purpose of producing a strong sentiment of national integration. To enable history play its part, it needs to be rewritten in an unprejudiced form. Its content should be reoriented, and textbooks should be purged of all that is anti-national. The teacher should be extra careful in handling the situation of conflict.

### Recommendations

A number of techniques could be used for promoting national emotional integration:

- (1) Make the teaching of history and government compulsory from Forms one to four and even in institutions of higher learning;
- (2) History should be made a special subject just like language and sciences;
- (3) To motivate the history teachers, the employer should give them study leave with pay to pursue further learning, just like in other disciplines;
- (4) The misleading notion that humanities are a specialty for the ladies should be discouraged;
- (5) Singing of the national anthem and other patriotic songs can go along with the way in creating in the mind of the young a rightful pride of their country;
- (6) Symposia, debates and discussions on topics of secular nature, besides increasing the thinking capacity of the students, will widen their mental horizon about the diversification of their country;
- (7) Public awareness or education is necessary for the re-orientation of human resource development efforts. This type of education should include the following special programmes: peace education, human right education and environmental education. This education should develop the attitudes which could conscientise and empower them to appreciate and cope with social and cultural diversities. The various concepts, such as interdependence, social justice, equality, equity, conflict resolution, ethnicity and democracy, and human rights should form the agenda for the campaign of both educators and politicians. The citizens should be taught the sources and causes of conflicts as well as the skills of conflict-resolution and how to promote peace at all levels. The public should be sensitized on the need for inter-ethnic harmony, peaceful-co-existence and the need to promote a sustainable nationhood (Kundu, 2000);
- (8) Stimulating students to read newspapers and books of non-communal nature, throwing light on the contributions of nationalists, will also help in creating national attitude;
- (9) Acquainting students with the national projects and consequent progress will make them conscious of the greatness of their country;
- (10) Talks may be given to the students on the living and food habits of people in different parts of the country to create better understanding;
- (11) Festivals pertaining to different sections of the community may be celebrated with national outlook. They are the symbols of our cultural heritage and can be exploited to bring home to students the essentially basic unity of the Kenyan culture and their national background;
- (12) The celebration of national days and secular festivals can also go a long way in promoting national consciousness. Once their imagination is aroused and they become emotionally aware of the significance of such occasions and demonstrations of our cultural solidarity, the festivals would be increasingly creative of a sense of community and national coherence;
- (13) Documentaries and school broadcasts can promote national consciousness in students by highlighting the synthesizing trend in Kenyan culture;
- (14) Exhibitions on the way of life people living in different parts can help to achieve emotional integration;
- (15) Educational institutions can be helped in formulating “sisterhood programmes” among themselves. These programmes would envisage the visits of selected students of their institutions on reciprocal basis and provide opportunities for cultural activities, which will help in promoting cross-cultural understanding;
- (16) The mass media should be used to sensitize the public on the potential dangers of inter-ethnic animosity that has been fermented in this country. Ethnic cleavages have been known to sow seeds of

discontent and enmity among the existing communities in a multi-party and multi-ethnic society. If such a situation goes beyond proportion, civil wars and internal clashes are inevitable.

### References

- Anyang-Nyongo, P. (1993). *The challenge of national leadership and demographic change in Kenya*. Shirikon Publication, Nairobi.
- K.I.E. (Kenya Institute of Education). (1992). *Secondary education syllabus* (Vol. 6). K.I.E., Nairobi.
- Kochhar, S. K. (1992). *Teaching of history*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Ltd..
- Kundu, B. N. (2000). Ethnicity and the challenge of nationhood in Kenya. In B. A. Ogot, & W. R. Ochieng' (Eds.), *Kenya: The making of a nation (1895-1995)*. IRPS, Maseno University.
- Moi, D. T. (1986). *Kenya African nationalism: Nyayo philosophy and principles*. Macmillan Publishers, Nairobi.
- Namaswa, D. G. (2000). Education and nation building. In B. A. Ogot, & W. R. Ochieng' (Eds.), *Kenya: The making of a nation (1895-1995)*. IRPS, Maseno University.
- Ogot, B. A. (1996). Transition from single-party to multiparty political system (1989-1993). In B. A. Ogot, & W. R. Ochieng' (Eds.), *Decolonization and independence in Kenya (1940-1993)*. E.A.E.P., Nairobi.
- Rowse, A. L. (1963). *The use of history*. Collier Books, New York.